



Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday, July 12, 2018, 4:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Rita Church, Lainey Rappaport, Emma Swift, Francis (Tag) Taginski

Commissioners Missing: Mellisa Cain

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Cemetery Office Assistant

Public Present: None

Attachments: None

Mtg. was called to order at 4:43pm by Rappaport

I. Approval of Agenda

Taginski moved to approve the agenda, Rappaport seconded

II. Approval of Minutes from April 12th Meeting

Rappaport moved to approve the minutes, Church seconded.

Before old business was discussed, the commission requested that Bushnell send test email to commission members to ensure that emails are being received. This has been an ongoing issue for quite some time and has yet to be resolved.

III. Old Business

A. Lakeview fence repair/replacement update

There was no updates on fence repair from the city or Ron Wannamaker. Bushnell reiterated the resolutions from the previous meeting to finance repair over several years and approval of hiring a company to fully survey the fence to provide a full estimate.

At this time Taginski expressed his frustration with the lack of communication between the cemetery/parks department and the commission. He felt as though the only time the commission received information was during commission meetings. This was unacceptable to him as it prevents commission members from providing informed decisions at meetings. He asked that, in the future, the commission be allowed to request work from Bushnell in order to better understand cemetery issues, that communication generally be improved on all levels, and that the commission finally receive the Parks department RFP.

Church brought up a previous grant that the cemetery received. No one seems to know what happened to that money. Taginski reiterated that there must be clearer



communication and more transparency at all levels for the betterment of the cemetery as a whole.

Rappaport then stated that she believes the commission should be informed of all work that Bushnell does at the cemetery office. Other commissioners and Bushnell disagreed, and eventually it was decided that Bushnell would inform the commission on any special events and give a recap at the commission meetings (as an item on the email).

B. Lakeview office building repair

Bushnell confirmed that there is \$50,000 in the budget between the previous fiscal year and the current fiscal year for office repair. There was an open invitation for contractors to view the property and bid for repairs, but no contractors came or bid. The parks department is reassessing options and will update the commission once a new plan is established.

C. Commission letter to City Council

Former commissioner Allison Curran provided draft notes for the letter to the city council.

Taginski informed the commission that Mayor Weinberger requested that the letter go to him instead of or before going to the city council. He also suggested that the commission limit the scope of the letter to 2 to 3 items. Taginski suggested that we give the mayor a month or so to review the letter before sending it to the city council. He also suggested that the commission drop green burial and add a request for an increased police presence at Greenmount. He would like to emphasize the importance of a new, south end cemetery and adding the search for a location into the master plan.

Swift suggested the removal of signage as this issue has already been dealt with. She also stated that she would like green burials to remain in the letter, not necessarily as something the commission wants to focus on but as something the community at large is interested in. Action does not need to be taken on green burial, but, as an emerging trend, we need to be aware of it. It should be a consideration as we select a location for a new cemetery.

After a further discussion of issues surrounding green burials, it was decided to include them in the letter as part of a discussion including multi-cultural burials (something the commission had not previously addressed) and insuring that the cemetery is accessible to all members of our community (accessibility, sustainability, affordability, and inclusivity).

Church brought up the question of how the green burial might affect the perpetual care fund (details of this will be discussed further later in the meeting). Her concern was that, as green burials require different, more extensive care, the cost may need to be recalculated and the percentage of money that goes to the bond may need to be higher. While this was not something to be included in the letter to the council it is something to be considered as the commission addresses the issue of green burial. Taginski suggested that perhaps local funeral directors could come to a future meeting and address the emerging trends in the funeral industry. Rappaport suggested a few individuals she knows personally, and all agreed that this would be a good idea for a future meeting.



The discussion of green burial continued for some time. Items discussed included the “half-measures” of using a vault with holes and wicker caskets (and sharing that information with individuals who were interested in green burial), concerns for the safety of cemetery workers, and the need for a very specific soil composition for green burials.

Returning to the city council letter, the idea of asking for volunteers to assist in repairs was modified slightly to include the concepts of academic outreach and community engagement with the cemeteries. Taginski suggested working with students (high school and college age) for historical research, and Swift added that this is something all community members could participate in. Rappaport reminded the commission that there are BHS students who are required to participate in community service as part of their curriculum. These students should be encouraged to come help with projects at the cemetery.

Taginski wanted to insure that the letter includes the concept of a planning document and to insure that the council is aware that we are working on a longer range plan for the cemeteries (a 3 to 5 year plan).

Swift asked if Bushnell intended to draft the letter or if the commission should do so. Bushnell stated that, with assistance from the commission she would be happy to draft the letter. The draft will be completed before the next meeting so that commission members will be able to review and discuss any edits required.

D. Reminder of upcoming parks commission meeting (7/17)

Bushnell reminded the commission that there is an upcoming parks commission meeting on July 17th. Rappaport stated her intent to attend and Taginski agreed that he would also attend.

IV. New Business

A. Election of officers

Swift declined to continue as chair as she has too much on her plate in her current position. Rappaport and Church also felt they were unable to chair the commission. Taginski was nominated by Swift to chair and Church seconded. Taginski accepted the position for the coming year.

B. Perpetual care fund

Rita asked if the time for perpetual care fund review was up. Bushnell confirmed that there is another year before the review is due. She will gather as much information as possible in the coming year so the commission will have a full complement of information to review upon the expiration of the trial. Bushnell asked for clarification on what exact information the commission was looking for. At their request she will examine how much money is invested, where it is invested, and what dividends it has yielded over the last 5 years. Taginski suggested that this information be presented in a spread sheet so that the trends are clear both before and after the rate increase. Church would like to know exactly what this money is being used for.

Taginski pointed out that Lakeview should not be priced out of the marketplace and that many other local cemeteries are less expensive than Lakeview. Bushnell responded that,



while other locations might be less expensive, Lakeview has a standard of care and appearance that far exceeds all other cemeteries. Both Rappaport and Church reported that other area cemeteries they had visited are not kept to this standard, and some older cemeteries have virtually no care at all (grass not mowed).

Rappaport reiterated her concerns about the state of Greenmount. As there are rarely burials there, she feels the care is not to the standard that it should be. She reports seeing lots of refuse and broken or damaged stones as well as a lack of care on the part of the cemetery maintenance workers. She would like to tour Greenmount with Cindi Wight in order to illustrate the ongoing issues.

Taginski suggested that Jeff also participate in this tour so that a clear plan can be established to move forward with repairs and upkeep. All were agreed that this was a good idea.

Church reiterated her concern about the larger stones that need repair or to be reset at Lakeview. These stones are too large for volunteers to safely reset. Taginski suggested that we speak to local companies that do repair work and ask what would be required in terms of equipment or finances to repair these stones. Bushnell suggested that a commission member or cemetery employee be present to ensure the safety of volunteers. Swift would like to see a “work day” every spring. Church would like to see family members/owners of the damaged stones contacted to possibly assist in repairs. Swift would like to get as many community members involved as possible.

V. Superintendent's Items

There were no superintendent's items.

VI. Commissioner's Items

Rappaport requested that Bushnell reach out to new commission member Mellisa Cain to see why she did not attend her first meeting. Bushnell will do so.

Church requested that Bushnell make an appointment with National Guard commander to retire old flags that have been pulled from graves over the past few years. Rappaport also commented that the VFW can also assist with this. Bushnell will contact one or the other to take care of flags.

Church requested that the flag in the GAF section of the cemetery be replaced before the October 20th tour. Bushnell will request that Jeff Shedd replace flag before then.

Church commented on the new ramp supplied by the parks department for events at the Louisa Howard Chapel. Taginski suggested that Bushnell send a letter of thanks to the parks department for the ramp. Bushnell will do so.

Rappaport suggested setting a date for the next meeting. The next meeting will be September 13th at 4:30pm.

VIII. Public Comments

There were no public comments



IX. Adjournment

Swift motioned to adjourn, Church seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:50pm.